

Appendix B

Summaries of *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah*

The discussion of the plots of *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah* in the main body of this dissertation is relatively brief. In order to facilitate reference to the events of the plays it seems advisable to give a brief summary of the plots of these two plays. In order not to disturb the flow of argumentation the summaries are being given in this appendix.

Plot of *Man and Superman*

Act I. The time is the last years of the nineteenth century, or the early years of the twentieth century. Roebuck Ramsden is opening letters from the morning mail. Octavius Robinson is shown into the study, and we learn that the occasion is a sad one brought on by the death of Ann Whitefield's father. We also learn that John Tanner, a friend of Octavius, has written a revolutionary pamphlet, and is not welcome in the house on that account. Tanner bursts into the room and reveals that he and Ramsden have been appointed joint guardians over Ann and her sister Rhoda. Ann enters and in the course of the conversation it becomes obvious that she is in love with Tanner. It is revealed that Violet Robinson, the sister of Octavius, is pregnant. Tanner congratulates Violet on following her instinct rather than convention, because he assumes she is not married, and she reveals that she is married. Violet also says that she is not at liberty to reveal the identity of her husband.

Act II. This takes place outside Tanner's country house. Henry Straker, Tanner's chauffeur is working on his employer's car. Octavius and some of the members of the group from Act I appear. The group is supposed to split up and go riding in the new motor cars. Ann forbids Rhoda to ride with Tanner. An American of Irish parentage, Hector Malone, is introduced and expresses an interest in Violet. He is told that Violet is married, but that she has not revealed who her husband is. Straker reveals to Tanner that Ann is not after Octavius, and that her prey is Tanner himself. This prompts Tanner to tell Straker to get the car ready to flee from Ann.

Act III. This is set in the Sierra mountains of Spain. The car, and with it Tanner and Straker, have been taken captive by a group of Spanish bandits. These bandits are led by a Jewish Englishman named Mendoza. The bandits are actually a group of disgruntled anarchists and socialists. Much of the bandits' time is spent functioning as a political debating society. The party falls asleep and a dream takes place. The characters of the dream are based the legend of Don Juan and have their earthly counterparts. The characters and their counterparts are Don Juan/Tanner, Ana/Ann, Devil/Mendoza, and Statue/Ramsden. The conversation revolves around heaven, hell, man, woman, sex, and evolution. At the end of the dream Don Juan goes to heaven; the Statue and the Devil go to the Devil's palace; Ana experiences an apotheosis of longing for the Superman. When Tanner awakes he finds that he and Mendoza shared the dream, but cannot remember it.

Act IV. This act takes place in a Spanish town. Straker has carried a message to Hector Malone. It turns out that there are two Hector Malones, and that they are father and son. The elder Malone is an Irishman who emigrated to America in the aftermath of the potato famine. He has become rich and wants to see his son marry into the English nobility. He has also invested in a company called Mendoza Ltd., and has come over to check out his investment. It is eventually revealed that the younger Malone and Violet are married. The

elder Malone is persuaded to accept Violet and to provide an income for her and her husband. Tanner finally yields to Ann's demands and agrees to marry her. The play ends on a note of universal laughter.

Plot of *Back to Methuselah*

In the Beginning, Act I. Adam and Eve confront a dead fawn. This prompts the realization that they can die an accidental death too. The serpent reveals to them that they are the result of an act of the will by Lilith. Lilith divided herself into two individuals, Adam and Eve. Adam decides to limit the span of his life to a thousand years, and to bind his will by a vow. The serpent also reveals the nature of sexual reproduction to Eve. The act ends with Eve blushing.

Act II. Several hundred years later. Adam and Eve are confronted by Cain. Cain has invented murder, war, and religion. The span of human life is beginning to decline. Adam expresses his disgust at Cain. Eve expresses her fondness for the poets, artists, and scientists.

The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas. Immediately after World War I. Conrad and Franklyn Barnabas have written a book in which they argue that to avoid political catastrophes the span of human life must be extended to three hundred years. We are introduced to a number of characters, the Reverend Haslam, Savvy Barnabas, and Lubin and Burge. Lubin and Burge are modelled on Asquith and Lloyd George. The secret of long life, it turns out, is simply intensely wanting and willing to live longer.

The Thing Happens. This is set about two hundred and fifty years later. England is governed by representatives of the former Colonial peoples, and the native Britons serve in purely ceremonial roles. There is a surplus in the national accounts due to a few people living extended lives. It turns out that the Archbishop of York is actually the Reverend Haslam from the preceding play. Mrs. Lutestring, a government minister, is the parlor-maid from that era. Mrs. Lutestring and the Archbishop agree that if the white race is to be preserved they must contact other long lived people.

The Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman. This part is in three acts but can be summarized very briefly. The time is 3,000 A.D. An elderly gentleman has accompanied a party of visitors to see the long lived oracle in Ireland. The party is comprised of a politician, his wife and daughter, and a man who is a Napoleon figure. The politician seeks political advice from the oracle and is told to go home. The Napoleon figure seeks to know how he can maintain his popularity. He is told to die before the tide turns, and the oracle attempts to shoot him. She misses. The elderly gentleman dies of discouragement due to the brevity of his own life and the folly of the short lived people.

As Far as Thought Can Reach. This play is set in 31,920. The short lived people have died out. Humans are born from eggs and have a childhood of four years. After four years they become Ancients and cease to be interested in art, love, and so on. The action of the play takes place in one day. A child is born from the egg. An artistic contest is held at which two sculptors are to produce works of art. One has done busts of the Ancients. The other one has collaborated with a young scientist, Pygmalion, to produce automatons. The automatons are humans like those of the twentieth century. The automatons accidentally kill Pygmalion. They die of discouragement after being questioned by one of the Ancients. The Ancient reveals his wish to become a vortex and to escape from the prison of the body. The Ancient leaves and the youths go into the temple as night arrives. Out of the darkness

ghostly forms emerge, and there is a discussion of the events of the play by Adam, Eve, Cain, the Serpent, and Lilith. The characters vanish one by one. Lilith is left alone, and delivers the final speech. She sees the evolutionary progress brought about by the decision to live a long life, and she looks forward to the future in which the spirit will be freed of matter. The play ends on this note of expectancy.